

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 216

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of John Prine, one of America's greatest songwriters.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were saddened to learn of the untimely passing of John Prine, a Grammy-winning artist and legendary American songwriter who combined literary genius with the common touch and homespun humor; and

WHEREAS, in creating his acclaimed body of folk-country classics, Mr. Prine used everyday experiences to write songs that explore the full spectrum of human experience; and

WHEREAS, he changed the face of modern American roots music, as his work inspired a new generation of Americana and country artists; and

WHEREAS, a native of Maywood, Illinois, John Prine grew up on the country music his father loved; although a poor student, he was a natural songwriter, and two of his earliest songs were included on his second album more than ten years after they were penned; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school in 1964, he became a mailman; during this period, he was inspired to write some of his classic early songs while walking the streets of his Chicago suburb; and

WHEREAS, John Prine was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1966 but luckily was stationed in Germany; his military experience during the Vietnam War informed perhaps his greatest song, "Sam Stone"; and

WHEREAS, after completing his tenure in the Army, he became a sensation on the Chicago folk scene; discovered by Kris Kristofferson and Paul Anka, he was soon offered a recording contract by a major label; and

WHEREAS, his 1971 self-titled debut album features some of his greatest songs and explores a variety of musical styles; although the album did not enjoy great success on the

charts upon initial release, *John Prine* is now considered a classic, serving as a touchstone for artists such as Jason Isbell, Margo Price, Amanda Shires, Todd Snider, and Sturgill Simpson; and

WHEREAS, after recording two more albums and receiving a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist in 1973, John Prine switched labels for 1978's seminal *Bruised Orange*, which was produced by his musical partner and friend, the late Steve Goodman; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Mr. Prine decided to found his own record label, Oh Boy Records, with his manager and business partner, Al Bunetta; the label's business model was successful and proved that singer-songwriters could excel without the support of a major label; and

WHEREAS, in 1989 and in subsequent years, he wisely turned down offers to buy Oh Boy, which released 1991's *The Missing Years*; the album was honored with a Grammy for Best Contemporary Folk Album, and the title track is revered as one of the most ambitious songs of his five-decade career; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, John Prine recorded a successful duets album with women artists, titled *In Spite of Ourselves*, and in 2005, he earned his second Grammy for *Fair & Square*; and

WHEREAS, that same year, Mr. Prine joined Ted Kooser, 13th Poet Laureate of the United States, becoming the first artist to read and play at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, his last studio album, *The Tree of Forgiveness*, was released in April 2018, just six months after he was named the Americana Music Association's Artist of the Year; and

WHEREAS, the album reached number five on the *Billboard* 200, the highest debut of his career, and he played some of his biggest concerts ever, including a sold-out tour opener at New York's Radio City Music Hall; and

WHEREAS, in addition to winning two Grammys for his albums, John Prine received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020; and

WHEREAS, he was also a member of the Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and the recipient of the 2016 PEN New England Song Lyrics of Literary Excellence Award; and

WHEREAS, although he was in many aspects peerless, John Prine was greatly respected and admired by his peers; he said that he tried to live in a space between his heroes Johnny Cash, who covered "Sam Stone" and modified the lyrics, and Bob Dylan, who praised Prine's work as "pure Proustian existentialism"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Prine's American classics have been covered by a wide variety of artists, including Bonnie Raitt, who popularized "Angel From Montgomery" and favorably compared the songwriter to Mark Twain, and Bette Midler who sang "Hello in There" on her debut album and described him as a "genius and a huge soul"; and

WHEREAS, John Prine has left behind an indelible body of work that will continue to inspire both his fellow songwriters and the average people who brought his songs to life; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of John Prine, one of America's greatest songwriters, reflecting fondly upon his legacy as a transformational force in modern American music, and extend to his family and many friends and fans our sympathy and condolences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.